

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What are the Math Placement Assessments?

A. There are 3 assessments with 20 math questions each. One assessment covers algebra, one covers trigonometry, and the third covers calculus. You are allowed 40 minutes to complete each online placement assessment. Calculators are not allowed.

- To pass the algebra assessment, you need to correctly answer 16 of the 20 questions. If you pass, you will not need to take Math 140 (College Algebra) your first semester.
- To pass the trigonometry assessment, you need to correctly answer 9 of the 20 questions. If you pass, you will not need to take Math 142 (Trigonometry and Analytic Geometry) your first semester.
- To pass the calculus assessment, you need to correctly answer 12 of the 20 questions. If you pass, you may choose to either begin in Math 165 (Calculus I) or Math 166 (Calculus II).

Q. Who takes the Math Placement Assessments?

A. All new students in the College of Engineering at Iowa State University are required to take the Math Placement Assessments unless you have transferred in college credit for the equivalent math class at ISU with a grade of “C” or better.

Q. When and where do I take the Math Placement Assessments?

A. You will take your math placement assessments online at <http://www.eng.iastate.edu/orientation/placement/mathplacement.asp> prior to coming to orientation or before meeting with your academic advisor. The Math Placement Assessments allow your advisor to place you into the appropriate math classes.

Q. What happens once I have finished taking my Math Placement Assessments?

A. When you have finished taking your assessments, your results are downloaded automatically and will be available to your academic advisor so that placement in an appropriate math course can be determined for your first semester at Iowa State University.

Choosing the Right Assessments

Q. Which Math Placement Assessment do I take?

A. If you have had algebra and trigonometry, you should take the algebra and trigonometry assessments. If you have had at least one semester of calculus and would like to test out of Calculus I, take the calculus assessments in addition the algebra and trigonometry assessment.

Q. I didn't take any trigonometry or calculus in high school. Will I have to take any placement assessments?

A. Yes. You will take only the algebra placement assessment.

Q. If I intend to go directly into Calculus I, do I have to take any placement assessments?

A. Yes. The algebra and trigonometry placement assessments are required even if you intend to start out in Calculus I.

Q. Can I pass out of Calculus I if I pass the calculus placement assessment even though I didn't take calculus in high school?

A. No. If you didn't take calculus in high school, you cannot take the calculus placement assessment. Therefore, you cannot pass out of Calculus I at Iowa State University.

Advanced Placement (AP) Credits

Q. If I have Advanced Placement credits, do I have to take any math placement assessments?

A. Yes. You will still need to take the placement assessments to show your math proficiency.

Q. When will my Advanced Placement scores be received by Iowa State University, if I have requested them to be sent?

A. If you take an AP exam during your senior year and request that the results be sent to Iowa State University, we will receive your scores in July. Once you receive your copy of the scores, contact your academic advisor at Iowa State to discuss your options for courses to take.

Q. What Advanced Placement scores do you accept for math?

A. For Calculus I credit, you need a 3 or better on the Calculus AB or BC exam. For credit in *both* Calculus I and Calculus II, a 4 or better on the Calculus BC exam is required. Advanced Placement credit will supersede the results of the placement assessments.

Transfer Credits

Q. If I have college transfer credits for algebra, do I have to take any placement assessments?

A. You do not need to take the algebra placement assessment if you have college credit for this course with a grade of "C" or better. Please take the trigonometry placement assessment unless you have never had any trigonometry.

Q. I have college transfer credit for trigonometry. Will I need to take any placement assessments?

A. You do not need to take the trigonometry placement assessment if you have college credit for this course with a grade of "C" or better. Please take the algebra placement assessment unless you are also transferring in Calculus I college credit with a grade of "C" or better.

Q. I have college transfer credit for trigonometry and Calculus I. Will I need to take any placement assessments?

A. You will not need to take any placement assessments if you are bringing in college credit for both trigonometry and Calculus I with a grade of "C" or better.

Q. I have college transfer credit for Calculus I and Calculus II. Will I have to take any placement assessments?

A. You will not need to take any placement assessments if you are bringing in college credit for both Calculus I and Calculus II with a grade of "C" or better.

More Details

Q. How do I prepare for my Math Placement Assessments?

A. After determining which Math Placement Assessments you will take, complete the practice questions for those areas and study the material before taking the actual placement assessments.

Q. How much time is allowed for each assessment?

A. You will have 40 minutes for each assessment. Allow additional time to attempt the practice questions before completing the actual placement assessment.

Q. May I use a calculator to take my placement assessments?

A. Since many Iowa State University math instructors will not allow calculators to be used during exams, no calculators are permitted while taking the math placement assessments.

Q. If I don't do well on my placement assessments, may I retake them?

A. No. Placement assessments may be taken only one time. To ensure that you do your best, please complete the practice questions and allow study time before taking the actual placement assessments.

Q. What do my Math Placement Assessment scores mean?

A. If you obtain a score of 16 out of 20 on the algebra assessment, you will not need to take Math 140 (College Algebra) your first semester. If you obtain a score of 9 out of 20 on the trigonometry assessment, you will not need to take Math 142 (Trigonometry and Analytic Geometry) your first semester. If you obtain a score of 12 out of 20 on the calculus assessment, you may choose to either begin in Math 165 (Calculus I) or Math 166 (Calculus II).

Q. What scores do I need to pass each placement assessment?

A. You need to correctly answer 16 out of 20 questions to pass the algebra assessment, 9 out of 20 questions to pass trigonometry, and 12 out of 20 to pass the Calculus I assessment.

Q. If I don't do well on my placement assessments and have to take an algebra or trigonometry math course, do I have to take the class at Iowa State University?

A. No. You may take the equivalent math course at another college and transfer the credits to Iowa State. Please first check with the Office of Admissions to ensure that the course will transfer in as the one required at Iowa State. Students often choose to take the transfer course in the summer prior to starting at Iowa State.

Q. If I don't do well on my trigonometry placement assessment and have to take a trigonometry class, will this put me behind in the required math sequence?

A. No. Trigonometry and Calculus I may be taken concurrently during the same semester. However, Trigonometry and Calculus II cannot be taken concurrently.

Q. If I don't do well on my placement assessments and have to take an algebra or trigonometry class, will these credits count towards my engineering degree at Iowa State University?

A. No. Algebra and trigonometry courses will not count towards your degree. Only Calculus I and Calculus II classes may be applied to your engineering degree.